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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN KORDOFAN - HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

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11. (U) Begin Summary: From April 5 to 15, a USAID/OFDA program officer conducted site visits in Kadugli, Abu Gebeha, Talodi, and Kauda areas in Southern Kordofan State. The USAID/OFDA officer monitored USAID/OFDA-funded programs, particularly in the rural health sector, and met with humanitarian actors and local officials to review the current humanitarian situation in the state. According to humanitarian agencies, additional emphasis on reintegration and recovery activities is critically needed in the coming months. The flooding that occurred from July to October 2007 negatively impacted the harvest in the areas visited, impeding recent returnees' efforts to recover household assets and improve their food security. During the USAID/OFDA officer's visit to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-controlled area of Kauda, it was apparent that the presence of two parallel governance systems in the state -- one linked to the north and the Government of National Unity (GNU) and one linked to the SPLM party in the Nuba Mountains -- has resulted in a complex and highly politicized environment within which relief organizations are struggling to work with the relevant authorities to implement recovery and development activities. End Summary.

RETURNS IN SOUTHERN KORDOFAN STATE

12. (U) During the war, many communities in the Nuba Mountains were forced to flee from prairies, valley floors, and other low-lying areas to the rocky hillsides where they terraced the steep slopes to cultivate sorghum and other crops. Since the signing of the Nuba Mountains ceasefire in January 2002 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005, communities have gradually gained confidence in the security situation and begun to relocate to the lower foothills and valleys where land is more fertile. This trend is visible in Kadugli, Rashad, Heiban, Talodi, Dulami, and Abu Gebeha localities where 'new' villages are being established.

Communities are struggling to re-establish social networks, clear and prepare land for cultivation, and access basic services, such as health, water, and education.

¶3. (U) According to the UN Mission in Sudan's Return, Recovery, and Reintegration (UNMIS RRR) unit, Southern Kordofan has received the second highest number of returnees of any state in Sudan since 2004.

Most people have returned spontaneously to areas of origin without international assistance. While accurate estimates of returnee numbers by locality/county and administrative unit/payam are currently unavailable, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that the Kauda area is believed to have received the largest proportion of returnees in the state. In addition, IOM noted that many spontaneous returnees to the Buram area south of Kadugli reportedly have not yet been identified or assisted by relief agencies. The pace of return in the state has outpaced most relief organizations' ability to monitor, assess, and assist returnees settling in remote areas.

¶4. (SBU) IOM and UNMIS RRR have also faced challenges in identifying an appropriate state government entity with which to coordinate return and reintegration activities in Southern Kordofan State. In the South, the UN and IOM coordinate with the Southern Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) and have developed effective methods of tracking returnees and planning reintegration services. USAID/OFDA contributed USD 4.5 million to IOM's returns program in Southern Sudan in FY 2007. In northern Sudan, the GNU Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) is tasked with coordinating internal displacement and returns with the UN and other agencies. In the Three Areas, where state governments were formed by merging Government of Sudan (GOS) and SPLM systems under the CPA, SSRRC and HAC were intended to jointly coordinate these activities. In reality, the effectiveness of HAC/SSRRC coordination varies from place to place. For example, in Abyei, USAID was told that the original SSRRC/HAC office is now simply called SSRRC. In Kadugli, IOM told USAID that a new government-affiliated organization called

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the Voluntary Returns and Reintegration Commission (VRRRC) had been created and would operate independently of SSRRC and HAC in order to facilitate return tracking and reintegration in Southern Kordofan. In private, IOM noted that HAC staff could not be used for return tracking in the state because returnees and communities mistrust the HAC's intentions.

ISSUE OF INTEGRATION HINDERS RECOVERY EFFORTS

¶5. (U) Two SPLM-controlled areas remain in the Nuba Mountains: the Kauda area (locally referred to as the eastern jebels) and the area southwest of Dilling (locally referred to as the western jebels). A USAID/OFDA program officer visited the Kauda area from April 11 to 14 and met the local commissioner, the head of the Secretariat of Health, the head of the Secretariat of Agriculture, and the local SSRRC representative to discuss humanitarian and recovery issues. The representatives from the various secretariats have limited coordination with GNU ministry officials in Kadugli or Khartoum.

¶6. (U) The humanitarian community has significantly improved infrastructure and basic services in the Kauda area, including a newly opened hospital run by the Diocese of El Obeid, several newly renovated schools, well equipped health clinics, and vocational training programs since the war ended. Despite these services and the years of emergency relief assistance provided to the Kauda community, the transition from relief to recovery is proving to be difficult and entangled with political issues surrounding CPA implementation and integration. Kauda is well positioned to transition existing agriculture, food security, livelihood, health, and water programs established during the relief phase to longer-term development programs. However, the Kauda community is resistant to recovery programs that include cost recovery for medicine, agriculture inputs, and health services. NGOs have commented that people in Kauda developed a dependency on international relief aid and have not yet adapted to recovery-oriented programs that encourage self-sufficiency and

sustainability.

¶17. (U) Meetings between the USAID/OFDA program officer, implementing partners, and local authorities revealed that the local authorities have linked the relief-to-recovery transition to progress on CPA implementation and state integration. The Secretariat of Health asked USAID not to stop providing relief assistance, such as free medicine and free health services, until the CPA has been fully implemented because the GNU has not yet taken responsibility for providing basic services to the citizens in the Kauda area. Effective transition from relief to recovery requires local authorities to assume responsibility for basic service provision. In Kauda, the local authorities clearly do not have the financial resources, the technical capacity, or the political will to begin administering services, particularly in the health sector. This dilemma puts USAID and its implementing partners in the difficult position of trying to implement recovery and development programs without support from local authorities, hindering the recovery process.

RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION NEEDS

¶18. (U) During the USAID/OFDA program officer's site visits and in meetings with community leaders, food security and agricultural inputs were repeatedly cited as a pressing need for returnee communities because of the bad harvest in 2007. On April 14, the first rains began in Southern Kordofan and many farmers will plant seeds in May and June. Seed and tool distribution needs to occur in the coming weeks. The 2007 rainy season, which resulted in heavy flooding, destroyed many crops that returnees planted. As a result, these households have not built up seed supplies or improved

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household food security as anticipated. In 2007, general food aid distribution was phased out in many areas of Southern Kordofan to reduce dependency on food aid and stimulate agricultural production.

USAID/OFDA will continue to support agricultural and food security interventions that specifically target returnee communities in the coming months.

¶19. (U) USAID/OFDA partners have implemented a wide range of livelihood programs in the state, including goat restocking, beekeeping, flour mills, and fruit tree nurseries. These programs have had a positive impact and assisted in getting local economies restarted. Small-scale livelihood activities will continue to be a need in areas of high return in the coming months.

DARFUR IDPS IN KAUDA

¶10. (U) On April 13, a USAID/OFDA program officer and a Save the Children staff member visited the Darfur internally displaced person (IDP) camp in Kauda and met with thQdlQ5s|Kauda to Abu Gebeha town or refugee camps in Kenya, such as Kakuma. As of April 2008, only 150 households remain in Kauda. The IDP leaders told the USAID/OFDA program officer that most of the group had moved to other locations with better employment opportunities and services. Interestingly, they found services in Kauda poorer than what they had left in Darfur. The IDP leaders also reported that the current IDP group fled insecurity in El Fasher in North Darfur, Mornei in West Darfur, and areas near Foro Baranga in West Darfur. In some cases, the IDPs traveled for three months to reach Kauda, stopping in various places along the way.

¶11. (U) The IDP camp in Kauda is located behind a weigh station and has three tattered UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) tents that serve as schools for the IDPs. Concern has supported the IDPs with vegetable seeds for gardening and has provided kits of relief commodities to all households. The IDPs also receive a UN World Food Program (WFP) food ration every two months consisting of sorghum, oil, and sugar. The IDP camp currently has two hand pumps, one of which was broken at the time of the visit, and 11 latrines. The Darfur IDP families pay approximately USD 1.50 per month to send each child to school in

the nearby UNICEF tents. The IDPs have access to free health services and medication at the USAID/OFDA-supported Save the Children health clinic.

¶12. (U) The IDP leaders expressed a desire to be allocated land and given seeds to farm this season, a request which local authorities and aid organizations are currently considering. Most IDPs generate income by selling charcoal, making bricks, or working as day laborers in town. The leaders characterized the security situation in Kauda as safe for their families. Overall, the Darfur IDP camp in Kauda has sufficient basic services and relief organizations are responding to the IDPs' needs as they arise.

COMMENT

¶13. (U) The US Mission will continue to engage with the local authorities in Kauda to emphasize that the transition from relief to recovery assistance is in the best interests of the community and its leadership. The current local authorities in the Kauda area did not serve in the Nuba Mountains during the war and have little training in governance and administration. Their perspective articulated to USAID staff that "things have gotten worse in the Nuba Mountains since the signing of the CPA" does not reflect the reality on the ground, nor does it acknowledge the efforts of the international community over the years. Aid workers who lived and

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worked in the Nuba Mountains during the war can list many peace dividends, particularly in infrastructure, daily life for Nuba citizens, and humanitarian conditions, since the end of the war. While great needs still exist in Kauda, the emergency situation has ended and recovery-oriented programs are best suited to respond to the needs in the current context. If the current mentality persists among Kauda authorities, recovery and development will remain difficult to implement and parallel governance systems will continue to hinder CPA implementation from a development point of view.

FERNANDEZ